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ABSTRACT

Librarians providing individual information instruction need to be able to quickly and accurately assess the student's level of experience and ability and to offer the correct balance between support and challenge. Paul Hersey's Situational Leadership Model can provide librarians with a cognitive framework for assessment; it helps the instructor to use techniques based on his or her assessment of the student's ability, thereby making instruction more learner-centered. In the Situational Leadership Model, one's leadership or teaching style is determined by the client's ability, and follows a progression through four quadrants, representing the student's developmental level and the appropriate leadership style. In the first quadrant, the instructor must provide high support and direction in order to help the inexperienced student move to the next stage. The second quadrant consists of the student who is ready to be an independent learner, but is unable to because he or she is in the process of developing the necessary skills. The quadrant three student needs low direction from the librarian, and occasional support as subject matter becomes more difficult. The quadrant four group consists of faculty members and students who have reached the goal of independent library user. In this paper, situational leadership theory is used to discuss how to assess the experience and developmental stages of adult learners, hearing-impaired students and students for whom English is a second language. Student characteristics and supportive behavior of the instructor are charted. (Contains 35 references.) (AEF)

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Using Situational Leadership to Reach the W*hole* Population

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Presently, incoming freshmen at Southeast Missouri State University receive a fifty minute orientation to the library at the beginning of the semester. However, librarians have found it necessary to develop additional instructional sessions for transfer students, adult learners and other special needs groups because many of these people need more than a fifty minute introduction to the library. Some students attend the extra sessions provided each semester, but much of the instruction is provided on an individual basis. It is important for a librarian to be able to quickly and accurately assess the student's level of experience and ability so that instruction begins at the right place.

Paul Hersey's Situational Leadership Model, which is used in management (Hersey, 1993), teaching (Grow, 1991), Nursing (Adams,1990) and counseling (Howard, 1986), provides an effective conceptual framework for assessing a student's capabilities. One's leadership or teaching style is determined by the client's ability, and follows a progression through four quadrants, representing the student's developmental level and the appropriate leadership style.

In the first quadrant, taking into consideration that one's final goal is to become an independent library user, the student is unready and unable at this point to begin working independently in the library. At this level, the instructor must provide high support and high direction in order to help the student move to the next stage. This support often comes in the form of individualized instruction and a learning environment in which the student can request assistance without fear of humiliation. There is usually

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more telling of basic information than teaching going on at this point, since feedback from the student is at a minimum. Follow-up and reinforcement of concepts is important especially for adult learners and other special needs students who are acquiring new skills. Positive experiences at this stage will result in students coming forward more readily with their information needs and developing the confidence necessary to meet the challenges with which they are faced. It requires skill on the instructor's part to provide the correct balance of challenge and support at this level. If the student is over-challenged and under- supported, he or she will give up or regress to earlier coping strategies. If there is too much support and too little challenge, the student will remain dependent on the instructor. The key is to provide the support, and to consistently present small challenges in the form of hands on experience for the student. It helps to remember that the automated reference area provides a barrier rather than a help to these students as it is something else to have to learn before learning the material necessary to complete a course assignment.

The second quadrant is made up of the "average freshman". This student is ready (and would prefer) to be an independent learner, but is unable because he or she is still in the process of developing the necessary skills. Library orientations and assistance from the reference desk usually meet the needs of these students. The instructor is still providing high direction and support, but is doing more teaching than telling and receiving more feedback from the student in the way of assignments that require critical thinking. The student is also more readily transferring knowledge about concepts like Boolean logic and assessment of sources from assignment to assignment. It is the transferring of skills that

the librarian focuses on more heavily, recognizing the task of teaching a process that leads to lifelong learning. At this stage, the student is beginning to look beyond the individual assignment as merely a means to an end and slowly begins to understand the value of learning the process.

The quadrant three student receives low direction from the librarian, and occasional support as the subject matter in upper division and graduate courses becomes more difficult to locate. This student is ready and able to become an independent library user, and is guided by internal motivation rather than external demands by instructors. The librarian moves from the role of teacher to that of consultant, providing low direction and a medium level of support. The librarian's main task with quadrant three students aside from assisting them in finding material is to keep them up to date on new databases and other changes in the library.

The quadrant four student is often an "invisible" library patron. In an academic library, this group consists of faculty members and students who have reached to goal of independent library users. Both quadrant three and quadrant four library users provide important information leading to improvement of services to the observant librarian. If a quadrant four library user asks why a certain book or service isn't available, it is often something the librarian should consider looking into. The person operating in quadrant four transfers skills from discipline to discipline and from library to library easily. Unlike the quadrant three student, they more readily understand why a small academic library doesn't have the databases and materials found in a research library. Low direction and support are provided for these patrons. Direction comes in the way of signage, and is

more appropriate for the independent library user who usually prefers to work without assistance from a librarian. Observing the problems of the quadrant four user can lead to better signage and instructional materials.

In the following sections, situational leadership theory will be used to discuss how to assess the experience and developmental stages of adult learners, hearing impaired students and students for whom English is a second language.

Adult Learners

Adult learners are those who are twenty-five years of age or older, who are returning to school after an absence of one year or more. These students enter higher education with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. The following description of the characteristics of adult learners is not meant to be an all-inclusive description of this group. They are tendencies that present challenges and barriers to these students and the librarians who work with them.

The adult learner's life is not campus focused. This student has a wider range of experience and influences to bring to bear on the educational process. This may be both an asset and a disadvantage. The person's time may be divided into several different roles; parent, worker, community member and student.

Adult learners do not always experience a feeling of being "on task" in the same way as 18-23 year olds, for whom education is a central developmental task . They often begin the educational experience having to take on the role of beginner, when in fact they may be quite advanced in other areas of life.

The frame of reference of the adult learner is naturally quite different from that of the average student. Many of the students in this group are first generation college students whose everyday lives are influenced by informal bases, and therefore may lack an understanding of the purpose of formal education beyond upgrading employment skills.

Adult learners often experience a lack of self-confidence initially because of their need to upgrade their study skills. Because of differing learning styles between younger and older people, they may believe they compare poorly to other students and feel a sense of competition with them.

Financial pressures and the need to justify the draining of family resources for education may cause the adult learner to feel rushed when pursuing studies. The family may be providing more resistance than support. As a result, each assignment and learning task can seem like a stumbling block rather than a stepping stone.

Of these characteristics, the one most important to overcome is the lack of self-confidence that some adult learners experience. It has been recommended (Steltenpohl and Shipton,1986) that nontraditional students fare better if they start out in homogeneous groups during their initial re-entry to college. Small group library instruction, especially for these students, helps provide a climate in which they are at ease about asking questions and can develop support systems within their group.

Because of the time constraints on adult learners, most of the work that goes on with them in the library comes in the form of individual instruction and brief transactions at the reference desk. It is helpful to be able to tell the difference between a person who has had little experience with formal education and the use of libraries and one who

merely needs to be brought up to date on changes in information retrieval and the idiosyncrasies of their particular library.

The unready and unable student will not only be frustrated by having to learn to use electronic databases, he or she will be overwhelmed with the concept of finding articles in the traditional indexes and abstracting services. This student will also experience confusion regarding the differences between the reference, periodical and general collection and will not have a clear idea of the purposes of each. Taking into consideration that this student is feeling rushed, unfavorably compared to others in the class and unsure of the point of the whole thing, one can imagine the level of despair. Initially, being present with the student; going to the source with him or her, providing individual instruction is extremely important; it is a matter of accepting and meeting the student where he or she is and providing the appropriate amount of support and direction. Once the student is shown how to do a task, they can be presented with less support and more challenge to work independently. The role of the librarian as a teacher needs to be clarified, so that the student clearly understands he or she is expected to perform the tasks independently, and learns to expect instruction rather than answers at the reference desk. The average adult learner moves rather quickly from quadrant one to quadrant two. This student can also tend to regress when external family and work pressures coincide with assignment deadlines. Understanding this can help the instructor deal effectively with the behavior without damaging the relationship with the student.

The adult learner who is operating in quadrants 2-4 is often mistaken for a quadrant 1 student because of their initial confusion in a new setting. The academic

library is often significantly larger than the libraries they have been familiar with in the past. These students may tend to use traditional paper sources and shy away from on-line databases at first, but after overcoming their reluctance, will quickly see the advantages of the developing technology in information retrieval. For librarians encountering the more advanced adult learner, that first hesitance and confusion may cause them to miscue and provide more direction and support than needed. When in doubt, it is always appropriate to start out with high direction and support, as long as the instructor moves along and continues to assess the patron's ability. A student who is experienced and accomplished in other areas of life but inexperienced in the higher education setting will work better with an instructor who plays the role of consultant rather than mentor. This stance recognizes the student's expertise and encourages active responsibility for learning while providing the necessary information for progress; a correct balance of challenge and support is achieved. As in the case of quadrant one adult learners, more advanced students can regress due to external pressures. If they are working with an instructor who does not know them, they can feign helplessness, thereby letting the instructor do as much thinking for them as possible to save time. Calmly stating one's function in the learning process and sometimes providing a little extra support can help in these situations.

One of the most rewarding aspects of working with adult learners is watching them "take wing" after a successful semester or two, when they begin to be able to integrate their valuable experiences and perspectives into the formal learning process.

Advice on Working with Students for Whom English is a Foreign Language

With the large and growing number of foreign students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities, academic librarians must be aware of ways these students can be better served. It is also important to understand some of the behaviors that these students exhibit help them cope with the tremendous changes occurring in their lives. Many international students do not realize that librarians are employed to assist them with the problems they are encountering in the library. When confronted with such a problem, many of these students would rather ask a friend for information than a librarian.

During their stays, all will suffer culture shock at various times, and sometimes the frustration that results from culture shock will be directed toward you or your library. It is important to remember at these times how difficult it is for these students to learn a new language and to live in a new culture.

The idea of doing library research may be something new to these students. Furthermore, the idea of developing good library skills may seem irrelevant to them. In many countries, libraries are closer to our notion of study halls. Librarians can help students learn more by including hands-on practice in their bibliographic instruction sessions. Immediate feedback is extremely important because librarians must assess their audiences quickly in order to avoid wasting class time.

International students, whether they are operating at quadrant one, or more advanced levels, are often too shy to approach the reference desk to ask for assistance. Some may glance in your direction, while others try very hard to be inconspicuous. Often

these students are very appreciative of any assistance. They need our help, and often verbal directions are not enough. Use hands-on instruction as much as possible.

Students learning English in quadrant two are usually proficient in finding books and articles but may run across occasional problems. Often these problems are quickly worked out with a little explanation.

Students learning English in quadrant three are similar to other students in this quadrant. Usually you only see these students when signs around the library are inadequate or something is not as clear as it should be. When these students do approach the desk, librarians unfamiliar with working with ESL students often want to assign them to quadrant 1 because of a language problem rather than a problem with the ability to perform some part of library research.

Students learning English in quadrant four are similar to other students in this quadrant. These students sometimes point out inadequacies with the collection in regards to books on their language or literature. They are excellent contact individuals in order to reach new students from the same country or language background.

It us worth repeating that when in doubt, it is always appropriate to start with high support and high direction, looking carefully for clues to the student's actual level of experience, and then modify one's instructional approach.

The Hearing Impaired Library Patron

More and more deaf and hard-of-hearing students are attending colleges and universities these days. Two recent developments have been cited for this trend: 1) recent passage of Federal laws requiring that the facilities and services of all private and public entities provide equal access for all able and disabled citizens, and 2) new developments in the technology of hearing aids have enabled more and more deaf and hearing-impaired students to be mainstreamed in the public schools with the result that many of these students go on to college.

There are about 24 million American citizens who have some degree of hearing-impairment, and we are very likely to encounter them anywhere in our daily activities--even in the library. The hearing-impaired are often called the "invisibly handicapped" because an impairment to one's hearing is not always immediately obvious when one meets such a person, therefore a person with a hearing impairment may go unnoticed unless one knows what to look for.

The term "hearing impaired" is used to refer to individuals who are both deaf and hard of hearing. What is the difference? Deaf people can hear only some of the loudest noise, and maybe not even that much. They also cannot hear speech well enough to understand the spoken word from another person. They might depend on sign language or some other visual means of understanding a message from another person. Their own speech, if they speak at all, might be greatly distorted or unintelligible. The hard of hearing person, on the other hand, usually has some limited hearing abilities and can often

understand speech under ideal conditions. Their speech might be clear and easy to understand; however this often depends upon when the person lost his or her hearing.

Speech and hearing specialists often categorize a hearing impairment according to the point in one's life at which the hearing loss becomes significant. A prelingual hearing loss refers to those who lost their hearing before they learned a spoken language. A person who is born deaf or hearing impaired, or loses his or her hearing before the age of 2 is considered to have a prelingual hearing impairment. A postlingual hearing loss refers to those who lost their hearing after they learned to speak a language. Many of these people are older individuals who have lost their hearing as part of the aging process. However, an ever increasing percentage of this group are in their late teens and early twenties and may have damaged their hearing by listening to too much loud music or excessively loud noises in the workplace. Their speech is often well established before they lose their hearing because they have heard other people speak and, therefore, learned to speak themselves by imitation. The person with a prelingual hearing loss, on the other hand, cannot hear well enough to imitate other people's speech correctly, or clearly enough, to be understood by most other people. So, then, the quality of a hearing impaired person's speech is often determined by the age of onset of the hearing loss. In other words, since one's hearing and speech are very much dependent upon one another, the age at which one experiences the beginnings of hearing loss will often determine the degree of impairment to one's speech.

As mentioned earlier, a person with a hearing impairment, whether it be total deafness or a moderate hearing loss, is considered to have an "invisible handicap." How

can such an individual be identified? There are certain characteristics or behavior traits that, when observed, will often--but not always--identify a hearing impaired person. Many of these characteristics are rather obvious, but they sometimes may be construed as being symptomatic of some other problem. Yet, the simultaneous occurrence of several of these characteristics will usually indicate that one is dealing with a hearing impaired person. These characteristics are:

1. Lack of attention.
2. Frequent requests for repetition of what was said.
3. Irrelevant answers.
4. Frequent mistakes in carrying out oral instructions.
5. Uncommon listening behaviors.
6. Unclear speech or speech defects.
7. Daydreaming.

Effective communication requires that the message be conveyed clearly, and that the receiver of the message understand the message as intended by the communicator. If the communication breaks down somewhere between the person sending out the message and the person receiving the message, the message will be garbled, misunderstood, or possibly not understood at all. Misunderstandings and the inability to communicate or to understand what someone else is trying to communicate often results in frustration. In the library-patron situation, the frustration may be felt by either side. The librarian may feel frustrated because he/she cannot understand what the message is. The patron may feel frustrated when the librarian is not understanding his/her message. Feelings of awkwardness and being uncomfortable may also surface in both the librarian and the patron.

The hearing impaired student often brings several deficiencies with him or her to the library. Among these might be an inability to communicate effectively, lack of knowledge concerning basic library research skills, and feelings of being overwhelmed or frustrated. When the librarian realizes that these feelings of frustration are directed more at the patron himself and not at the librarian, then the librarian can better assist the patron. The prelingual hearing impaired students with low library literacy skills are at that level, not necessarily by choice, but because they have expended so much time and energy during the early part of their lives just learning the basic life skills which most people take for granted. These basic life skills are often learned concurrently with extensive training to communicate, and because of the importance of the two, training in other areas, such as how to use the library, must often be sacrificed. So, the hearing impaired students frequently do stay with their age group peers and move upward through the grades, even into the colleges and universities, and perform well intellectually but they may lack the skills to work effectively in the library environment. A basic understanding of the situational leadership model can be helpful in adapting one's mode of providing library assistance to the hearing impaired student.

One might mistakenly place the hearing impaired student in Quadrant 1 because he/she might appear both unready and unable to learn when, in fact, quite the opposite may be true. Most hearing impaired individuals have a great desire to learn and usually have the motivation necessary to overcome their limited hearing abilities. To the untrained observer, however, the students may appear to be both unready and unable to learn because some of the characteristics which suggest a hearing impairment may be present

(e.g., frustration, seeming lack of attention, speech impediment, etc.). Hearing impaired individuals learn quickly via the "show and do" method. For example, a one-time demonstration of how to use a PC-based CD-ROM workstation will usually suffice and then the student is able to go "solo" and perform his assignment with little or no further assistance and, as a result, quickly move onto Quadrant 2.

The hearing impaired student in Quadrant 2 possesses basic library skills after a minimum amount of instruction, and should be able to work independently without further intervention from the librarian. Having learned some basic library skills, the student can function within the same environment. However, if the student has to use a larger library or use other library tools which have not yet been demonstrated, the student might regress. So long as no higher-level demands are made on the student, he should be able to function satisfactorily at this level and in time even move on over to Quadrant 3.

The student in Quadrant 3 is both ready and able, thereby achieving more independence from the librarian. Having, too, developed an increasing self-confidence in themselves, these students are more willing to ask for help but are more judicious in choosing when to ask for assistance and to do so without resorting to self-defense mechanisms. They see the librarian as a means to assist them in doing their library assignments. These students, too, are able to transfer their library skills seamlessly from one discipline to another, and even from one library to another because they perceive the similarities.

The independent learner, or Quadrant 4 student, is the one most librarians enjoy the greatest, particularly when they see such an individual achieve this level after beginning

in Quadrants 1 or 2. The Quadrant 4 student is "invisible" because they are hardly noticed in that they rarely seek assistance, are highly motivated and self-focusing, and are often helpful in pointing out gaps in the library collection. Hearing-impaired students can achieve this level but it often takes a while to overcome years of self-doubt and dependency on other individuals to assist them in functioning in an environment where hearing people are the norm.

Another consideration is how does one tell the difference between a hearing impaired person who is operating in Quadrant 1 and one who is a more experienced student? A speech impediment may cause a librarian to incorrectly underestimate a student's cognitive ability. If, after several attempts at verbal communication, the librarian is not understanding the student's informational needs, or the student is not comprehending the librarian's response, perhaps communication in the form of written notes would be in order. No one should be offended at being asked to write down his/her informational needs or response when it is done in the spirit of assisting the other individual. Indeed, a much more positive exchange of information will occur wherever the spirit of cooperation prevails between the librarian and library patron.

What do we do when faced with a situation involving a hearing impaired person?

1. Quickly identify the communication deficit.
2. Develop a means of dealing with it.
3. Respond in an appropriate manner.

After a communication deficit has been correctly recognized and the librarian has responded to it appropriately, the end results should be threefold: 1) more productive communication between the librarian and the hearing impaired patron, 2) a greatly

enhanced comfort level for both the librarian and the patron, and 3) more productive personal interaction between the two.

Conclusion

Many of the techniques that instructors use with special needs groups are good techniques for any teaching situation. They involve taking extra care to assure clear communication and paying attention to meeting the student where he or she is at a particular point of instruction. Librarians are often concerned about finding the correct balance between support and challenge. It is not helpful to spoon feed a student, nor does it help the student who is inexperienced to withhold the necessary support. Situational Leadership Theory can provide the librarian with a cognitive framework for intelligently using an eclectic approach to instruction. For example, inexperienced instructors may sometimes have a tendency to be overly helpful, or to rely on a single approach, which may meet their own needs more than the student's. Situational Leadership Theory helps the instructor use techniques based on his or her assessment of the student's ability, thereby making instruction more student-centered. This helps to assure that the instructor knows what he or she is doing and why. The most difficult area to deal with is quadrant one, because it is sometimes hard to tell whether a student is inexperienced or merely temporarily confused. In general, it is important to be present and supportive with quadrant one students. For the librarian, this means going to the database or reference section with the student the first time and providing instruction. It is important to quickly move the student toward quadrant two by gradually removing support, but this often will happen more quickly if the initial support is there. Without it, the student may give up and

either quit altogether or rely on other students for help. When working with quadrant two students, the librarian sends the student to the proper source of information with pathfinders and instructional aids - a little less support than that provided for quadrant one students. In working with quadrant three and four students, the difficulties they experience in the library provide valuable information on improving service, instructional materials and signage.

An academic library serves a wide variety of users, from the very inexperienced to the highly sophisticated researcher. It is challenging to effectively meet the needs of such a diverse group of people. Situational Leadership Theory provides one way of looking at ways to cover all the bases.

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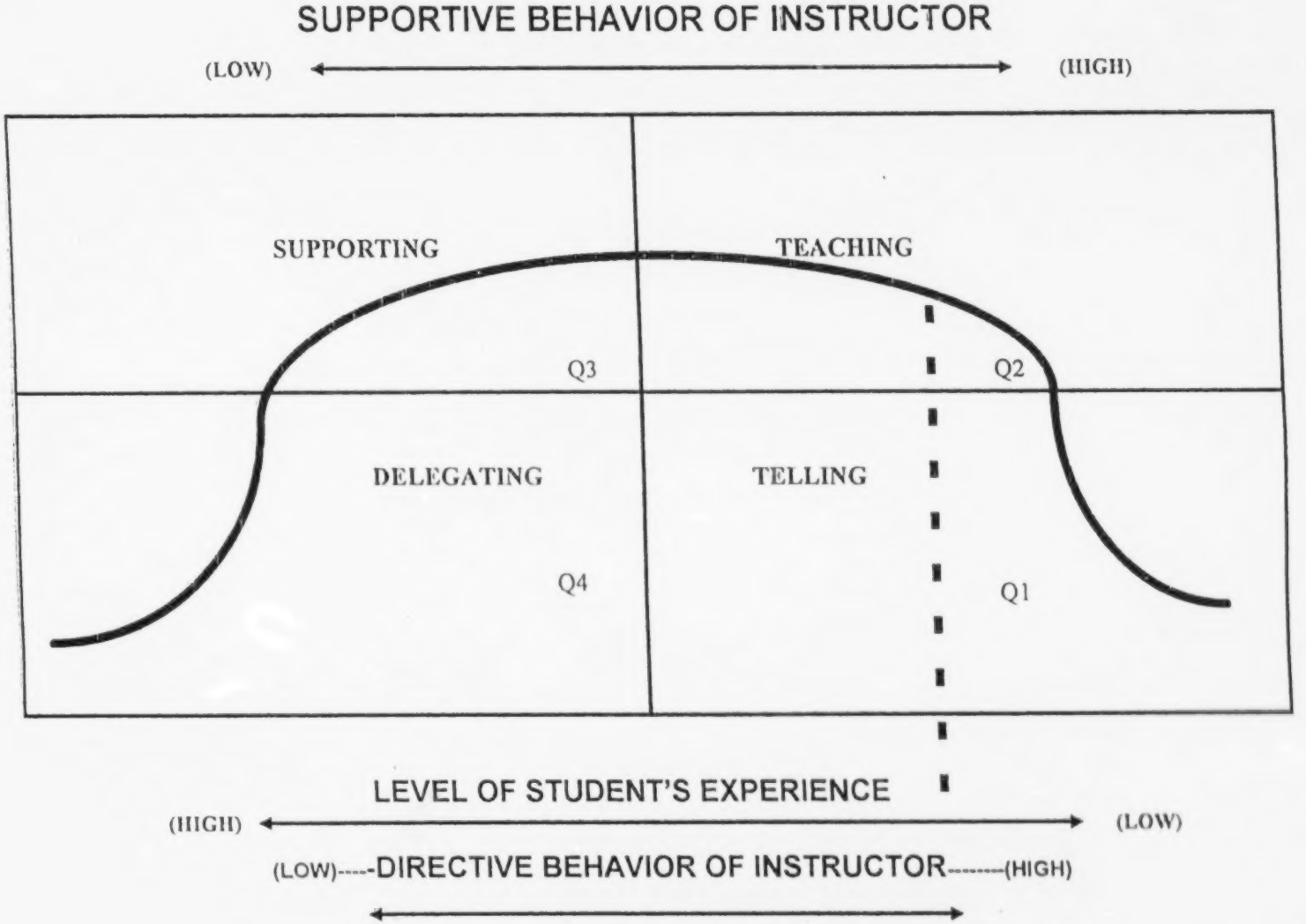
STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

APPROACHES DESK READILY PROBLEM BEHAVIOR MAY STEM FROM BEING FORCED TO ASK QUESTIONS RATHER THAN WORKING NDEPENDENTLY HIGH AWARENESS OF WHAT IS AVAILABLE KNOWS ADVANCED SEARCH STRATEGIES MAY REGRESS TO Q1 DUE TO EXTERNAL PRESSURES, IN WHICH CASE, BEHAVIOR WILL NOT BE CONSISTENT TRANSFERS SKILLS FROM DISCIPLINE TO DISCIPLINE AND FROM LIBRARY TO LIBRARY EASILY **READY/ABLE** Q3	"AVERAGE" FRESHMAN WILLING TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY AFTER BASIC INSTRUCTION HAS A DESIRE TO BE MORE INDEPENDENT MAY REGRESS TO Q1 AS A RESULT OF PRESSURE , PROCRASTINATION OR EXPOSURE TO UNFAMILIAR MATERIAL MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY TRANSFERRING LIBRARY SKILLS TO A NEW AND PROBABLY LARGER SETTING, BUT HAS A BASIC IDEA OF WHAT IS AVAILABLE IN THE LIBRARY HANDLES LEARNING PROCESS AND CONTENT AT THE SAME TIME MORE EASILY **READY/UNABLE** Q2
"INVISIBLE" BRING SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SERVICE PROBLEMS THEY EXPERIENCE CAN LEAD TO IMPROVED SERVICES BRING THEIR OWN FOCUS AND MOTIVATION WHEN THEY ASK "WHY DON'T YOU HAVE---" IT IS USUALLY SOMETHING YOU SHOULD HAVE **INDEPENDENT LEARNER** Q4	RELUCTANT TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY MAY REFUSE TO APPROACH REFERENCE DESK, BECOMES UPSET WHEN STRATEGIES DON'T WORK PROBLEM BEHAVIOR MAY STEM FROM RELUCTANCE TO REVEAL LACK OF KNOWLEDGE - BLUFFING HELPLESS - FEARUL - LOST - OVERWHELMED MAY CLEARLY STATE NEED FOR BASIC INSTRUCTION, WILL PROBABLY NEED FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS TO REINFORCE CONCEPTS CONFUSED BY LEARNING CONTENT AND PROCESS AT THE SAME TIME MAY NOT UNDERSTAND LIBRARIAN'S FUNCTION MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED IN OTHER AREAS OF LIFE AND RESENT TAKING ON ROLE OF "BEGINNER" OR STUDENT **UNREADY/UNABLE** Q1


SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIOR OF INSTRUCTOR
(LOW)
(HIGH)
SUPPORTING
TEACHING
Q3
Q2
DELEGATING
TELLING
Q4
Q1
LEVEL OF STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE
(HIGH)
(LOW)
(LOW)-----DIRECTIVE BEHAVIOR OF INSTRUCTOR-------(HIGH)